THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): A statement is enclosed regarding agreements signed with West European countries (*see* below). Government has not signed any agreement with East European countries and with USA.

Statement

Agreements signed with Foreign Countries

FRANCE

(1) Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters signed in January, 1998 to enable the two countries to combat crime and facilitate the bringing of fugitive offenders to justice. It reflects the shared concern of the two countries over the glotalisation and internationalization of crime.

(2) Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Civil Matters signed in January 1998 to provide a juridical framework for the transmission and serving of documents, obtaining of evidence and recognition and enforcement of the substantial commercial and economic links between the two countries.

(3) Letter of Intent on Cooperation in the field of Biotechnology signed in January 1998 provides for implementation of joint projects in this field.

GERMANY

Cultural Exchange Programme (1997-2000) signed in December 1997.

GREECE

Agreement on Tourism signed in January, 1998.

ITALY

(1) Agreement to Combat Terrorism, Organised Crime and Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances signed in January 1998.

(2) Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between Small and Medium Enterprises signed in January 1998.

(3) Cultural Exchange Programme (1998-2000) signed in January 1998.

Indian in Gulf Prisons

180. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indians in Gulf prisons as on date; and

(b) the reasons for so many Indians undergoing imprisonment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) According to available information, the number of Indians in prisons in the Gulf countries as on 20.5.98 are as follows (the figures available for Saudi Arabia are only of those convicted since 1996):—

(1) Bahrain	—	113
(2) Iraq	—	4
(3) Kuwait	—	53
(4) Oman	—	207
(5) Qatar	—	170
(6) Saudi Arabia	—	2702
(7) United Arab Emirates	—	800

(b) The above number includes those who have been convicted or are awaiting trial in respect of serious crimes such as murder, adultery and contraband (including narcotics) trade as well as of relatively minor offences such as theft, consumption of liquor, trespassing and violation of local labour laws.

Study on problems faced by Indians working Abroad

181. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of Indians working abroad, country-wise;

(b) whether a study has been conducted by Government on the various problems faced by the Indians working abroad;

(c) if so, the details thereof alongwith the action taken on the study report; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) A statement, drawn up according to available information, detailing the country-wise break-up of Indian citizens abroad, is enclosed (*see* below).

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) While Government have not commissioned a specific study relating to various problems faced by Indians working abroad, two teams, including one comprising members of the Standing Committee of Parliament on External Affairs, recently visited the Gulf region to assess, inter alia, the capacity of the Indian diplomatic missions/posts to address the consular problems of the Indians working in the region. The other was a joint MEA-MOF official team. As a result, the strength of the consular staff in these missions/posts has been augmented. The Indian diplomatic missions/posts abroad are also continuously analysing the various problems faced by Indian workers in the area/countries of their jurisdiction in the context of the local socio-economic or political environment. Prompt action is taken to resolve these problems while keeping the relevant authorities in India informed, and seeking advice and assistance wherever required.

Statement

Study on problems faced by Indians working abroad

S. No.	Name of the Country	Nationals
1.	Afghanistan	0
2.	Algeria	80
3.	Angola	70
4.	Anguilla	4
5.	Antigua & Barbuda	40
6.	Argentina	800
7.	Armenia	150
8.	Aruba	50
9.	Albania	5
10.	Australia	28564
11.	Austria	11000
12.	Azerbaijan	120
13.	Bahamas	0
14.	Bahrain	100000
15.	Bangladesh	555
16.	Belarus	94
17.	Barbados	69
18.	Belgium	5000
19.	Belize	340
20.	Republic of Benin (cotonow)	400
21.	Bhutan	20000
22.	Bolivia	50
23.	Bosnia & Herzegovina	1
24.	Botswana	3000
25.	Brazil	1500
26.	Brunei	9208
27.	Bulgaria	35
28.	Burkina Faso	15
29.	Burundi	700
30.	Cambodia	183
31.	Cameroun	250
32.	Canada	0
33.	Cape Verde	0
34.	Cayman Island	50
35.	Central African Republic	10
36.	Chad	0
37.	Chile	500
38.	China	400
39.	Colombia	59
40.	Comores	250
41.	Cango	15
42.	Costa Rica	7
43.	Croatia	4
44.	Cuba	15
45.	Cyprus	350
46.	Czech Republic	56
47.	Denmark	500
48.	Dominica	18
49.	Djibouti	350
50.	Ecuador	6
51.	Egypt	1350
52.	Eritrea	10
53.	El. Salvador	6
54.	Estonia	12
55.	Equitorial Guinea	6

S. No.	Name of the Country	Nationals
56.	Ethiopia	12
57.	Finland	600
58.	France	10000
59.	Gabon	5
60.	Gambia	80
61.	Guatemala	8
62.	Germany	34020
63.	Georgia	60
64.	Ghana	1500
65.	Greece	10340
66.	Grenada	56
67.	Guinea	60
68.	Guinea Bissau	5
69.	Guyana	240
70.	Honduras	5
71.	Hong Kong	20990
72.	Hungary	180
73.	Iceland	18
74.	Indonesia	5400
75.	Iran	1400
76.	Iraq	80
77.	Ireland	1500
78.	Israel	500
79.	Italy	15052
80.	Ivory Coast	125
81.	Jamaica	1200
82.	Japan	5508
83.	Jordan	900
84.	Kazakhastan	745
85.	Kenya	8000
86.	Korea (Rep. of)	400
87.	Korea (DPR. of)	1
88.	Kuwait	195000
89.	Kyrghyzstan	175
90.	Latvia	75
91.	Laos PDR	183
92.	Lebanon	11000
93.	Lesotho	250
94.	Liberia	300
95.	Libya	12000
96.	Luxembourg	179
97.	Madagascar	3000
98.	Malawi	300
99.	Malaysia	30000
100.	Maldives	1746
101.	Malta	150
102.	Mali	13
103.	Mauritius	360
104.	Mauritania	0

S. No.	Name of the Country	Nationals
105.	Mexico	250
106.	Moldova	0
107.	Mongolia	40
108.	Montserrat	15
109.	Morocco	340
110.	Macedonia	0
111.	Mozambique	500
112.	Myanmar	2175
113.	Namibia	52
114.	Nauru	100
115.	Nepal	1000000
116.	Netherlands	5000
117.	Netherlands Antilles Curacao & St. Nearten	2000
118.	New Zealand	750
119.	Nicaragua	4
120.	Niger	13
121.	Nigeria	22000
122.	Norway	2100
123.	Oman	410825
124.	Pakistan	0
125	Panama	3828
126	Paraguay	30
127	Papua New Guinea	0
128	Peru	200
129	Philippines	13000
130	Poland	600
131	Portugal	2000
132	Qutar	80000
133	Reunion Island	173
134	Romania	220
135	Saudi Arabia	1300000
136	Senegal	40
137	Seychelles	500
138	Sierra Loone	430
139	Singapore	28000
140	Somalia	0
141	South Africa	3000
142	Spain	14000
143	Sri Lanka	131220
144	St. Kitts & Nevis	16
145	St.Vincent&theGrenadines	20
146	St. Lucia	75
147	Sudan	1150
148	Surinam	150
149	Swaziland	200
150	Sweden	1535
151	Switzerland	4169
152	Syrian Arab Republic	500

S. No.	Name of the Country	Nationals
153	Slovenia	10
154	Slovak Republic	50
155	Tadjikistan	143
156	Tanzania	3500
157	Thailand	15000
158	Togo	300
159	Tonga	50
160	Trinidad & Tabago	300
161	Tunisia	45
162	Turkey	110
163	Turks & Caicos Island	20
164	Turkmenistan	270
165	Uganda	2000
166	Ukraine	2100
167	U.A.E.	800000
168	U.K.	130000
169	U.S.A.	28000
170	Russia	12000
171	Uruguay	10
172	Uzbekistan	360
173	Vanuatu	0
174	Venezuela	400
175	Vietnam	350
176	Western Samon	10
177	Yemen, Rep. of	3500
178	Yugoslavia	16
179	Zaire	650
180	Zambia	60000
181	Zimbabwe	15500
	TOTAL.	4666192

Statement

Economic relations and friendship with Pakistan and other SAARC countries

PAKISTAN

At India's initiative, the bilateral dialogue with Pakistan at the level of Foreign Secretaries was resumed in 1997. Three rounds of Foreign Secretary level talks have been held on March 28—31, 1997 in New Delhi, and June 19—23, 1997 at Islamabad. On the conclusion of the round, a Joint Statement was issued identifying the major subjects to be discussed which were Peace and security, including CBMs, Jammu and Kashmir, Siachen, Tulbul Navigation Project, Sir Creek, Terrorism and drug trafficking, Economic and commercial cooperation, and promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields.

Pakistan has yet to respond to a proposal to carry forward the dialogue which was handed by our Foreign Secretary to his Pakistani counterpart in Dhaka in January 1998 which constituted the third round.

Government has taken several measures to promote people to people relations such as issuance of greater number of visas by our High Commission in Islamabad to Pakistani nationals, simplification of visa regime for Pakistani nationals, and promotion of greater interaction amongst academicians, scholars, journalists and intellectuals of the two countries.

Measures adopted by us include an increase in the maximum number of cities to which Pakistani nationals can travel during a visit to India; grant of one-year multiple entry visas to eligible Pakistani businessmen whenever necessary, with a provision for different checkpoints for entry into and exit from India; the international airport at Chennai has been designated as an additional checkpoint for the arrival and departure of Pakistani nationals in addition to Delhi and Mumbai airports and the Attari railhead; grant of exemption from police reporting (EPR) visas as far as possible to, inter alia, artistes; journalists, students, businessmen, senior citizens and children; visa fees for, inter alia, senior citizens, artistes, students and jounalists have been waived; and provision to grant visas to eligible reputed Pakistani artistes with the permission to give commercial performance. Pakistan has, in bilateral discussions, informed us that it is taking steps to ease its visa regime for Indian national desiring to visit Pakistan.

While India has granted Most Favoured Nation status to Pakistan, the latter has not yet extended the MFN

status to India. Pakistan restricts imports from India to 604 items. We have urged Pakistan to fulfil its WTO obligations. Government have taken up the issue of trade relations with Pakistan during the recent discussions between the two countries. We have conveyed our desire to build economic and commercial relations as well as suggested specific projects such as gas pipeline and purchase of electricity from Pakistan. Pakistan maintains that its trade and commercial relations with India would be based on the mutuality of interest, level playing field and transparency. Pakistan also links the Kashmir issue with trade relations. We have conveyed to Pakistan our willingness to discuss technical, commercial and other issues relating to the electricity sale proposal. Pakistan is yet to respond.

BANGLADESH

Economic cooperation with Bangladesh was discussed at the 5th Joint Economic Commission held in New Delhi in March 1997. The 32nd Session of the Joint Rivers Commission, held in Dhaka in July 1997, decides, inter alia, to take up issues relating to sharing of waters of common rivers in phases, with priority to the Teesta. One round of discussions was held in Bangladesh in August 1997 on the sharing of Teesta waters. One round of discussion was held in Dhaka on a draft Motor Vehicles Agreement. In November, 1997, the Inland Water Trade & Transit Protocol was renewed upto October 3, 1999. The Cultural & Academic Exchange Programme for 1997—99 was signed in New Delhi in November, 1997. Prime Minister visited Dhaka in January 1998 for the Bangladesh-India-Pakistan Trilateral Business Summit in January, 1998.

Government's commitment to sustaining a stable, friendly and cooperative relationship with Bangladesh was conveyed by Prime Minister in his letter of March 23, 1998 to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Discussions aimed at strengthening our relations with Bangladesh were held during the visit of Foreign Minister of Bangladesh and Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Mr. Abdus Samad Azad, to India between April 20—24, 1998. During the visit, Government reiterated its commitment to promoting closer ties with Bangladesh. Our interest in transit rights through Bangladesh to our North Eastern States was also affirmed. Our interest in promoting bilateral cooperation in a variety of other areas was also conveyed.

SRI LANKA

The 3rd Session of the Indo-Sri Lanka Joint Commission met in Colombo in January 1997. Both countries agreed on the need to expand bilateral cooperation in various fields. During External Affairs Minister's visit at that time, Agreements on Protection and Promotion of Bilateral Investments and on the realese of the second tranche of Government of India's $ 30 million line of credit were concluded. A Cultural Exchange Programme for 1996—98 was also signed.

Government's desire to foster cooperation with Sri Lanka was conveyed by Prime Minister to the Special Envoy of the President of Sri Lanka and Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, who visited India between March 21—23, 1998.

MALDIVES

Our close and friendly relations with Maldives continued through 1997-98. Prime Minister visited Maldives for the IX SAARC Summit in Male in May, 1997. The Maldives Institute of Technical Education, built with Indian technical assistance, was formally inaugurated in May, 1997. A fresh bilateral Cultural Exchange Programme is being discussed. The President of the Maldives, H.E. Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, is expected to visit India between June 2—4, 1998.

NEPAL

India has contributed significantly to Nepal's economic development. During Prime Minister's visit to Nepal in June 1997, both sides expressed the desire to forge inter-linkages in new spheres and elevate existing relations to a new high.

Three agreements were signed during the visit: A Power Trade Agreement to promote private sector participation for accelerated and enhanced development of the power infrastructure in both countries; a Memorandum of Understanding on Civil Aviation matters; and Exchange of Instruments of Ratification of the Mahakali Treaty concerning the integrated development of Mahakali river, including Sarda Barrage, Tanakpur Barrage and Pancheshwar Project.

Nepal's request for an additional transit route to Bangladesh via Phulbari was accepted during the Prime Minister's visit and the route was operationalised from September 1, 1997. Following a review of the working of the route in March, 1998 at Commerce Secretary level talks in New Delhi, Nepal's requests for several relaxations in the operating modalities were acceded to. This was widely welcomed in Nepal by the Government, leaders from different political parties cutting across party lines, the media and business community. The new arrangement was viewed as a goodwill gesture from the new Government in India towards Nepal which is likely to have a positive impact on the Kingdom's foreign trade prospects.

The Action Plan envisaged for 1998-99 includes several initiatives towards further strengthening bilateral relations in the economic sphere. The Transit Treaty, which provides for port facilites to Nepal at Haldia, specifies 15 transit routes between the port and the India-Nepal border, besides identifying 22 entry/excit points along the India-Nepal border for mutual trade and Nepal-Nepal transit, is expected to be renewed in December 1998. Construction of a rail link between Sirsiya and Raxaul is likely to commence later this year so that the project attains completion simultaneously with that of the new International Container Depot in Nepal. The prestigious B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences project at Dharan is scheduled to attain completion in October 1998 within the target date and projected cost estimates.

There are no restrictions on cultural exchanges of artists between India and Nepal.

BHUTAN

India and Bhutan have a long history of extensive and mutually beneficial economic cooperation. There is a completely free trade regime betwen the two countries. The India-Bhutan Trade & Commerce Agreement was renewed in March 1995 and is effective for ten years.

India has been the principal donor of aid to Bhutan and has made a major contribution in the development of infrastructure in Bhutan, especially in the development of road network, educational institutions, health care, communication facilities, hydro-electric projects, survey, mineral exploration, etc. The first two Five Year Plans of Bhutan were entirely financed by India. The Chukha Hydro-electric Project with a capacity of 336 MW and built by India at a cost of Rs. 247 crores was inaugurated in 1988. The project provides nearly half of Bhutan's national revenue and is a shining example of Indo-Bhutan economic cooperation.

India's contribution to the 8th Five Year Plan is Rs. 900 crores. Besides this, India will be funding three major projects—

Tala and Kurichu Hydro-electric projects and Dungsum Cement Plant.

Bhutan's response to the measures taken by India to maintain close ties with that country has been positive. Bhutan has lent support to India at various international fora including on the issue of CTBT and India's membership on the Security Council. They have also been supportive on the India's nuclear tests.

The Annual Plan talks between the two countries were held in New Delhi on 2—4 March 1998 where, after discussions, projects for implementation during the financial year 1998-99 were identified. The projects agreed to be taken up include power Transmission, upgradation of the sub-transmission and distribution system in Thimpu and Paro, Mini-hydel

projects, hospital construction, construction of roads and bridges, improvement and upgradation of transmission grid, rural electrification, education sector, strengthening of Paro airport and construction of High Court building.

There are no restrictions on cultural exchanges or visits of artists between the two countries. A large number of Bhutanese students study in Indian schools and colleges on a private basis, 50 scholarships each are extended to them under the Colombo Plan and Government of India Scholarship Scheme respectively. India also provides experts and specialists to Bhutan in various fields.

International Reaction on Nuclear Tests

185. DR. SHRIKANT RAMACHANDRA JICHKAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) Which are the countries who have congratulated India on the successful tests of three devices at Pokhran on 11.5.98 and which are the countries who have criticised our country;

(b) What is the plan of Government to surmount the adverse reactions which have come against India; and

(c) what steps will be taken to consolidate India's position in the international community *vis-a-vis* the recent nuclear tests?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) A number of countries have conveyed a degree of understanding of the rationale behind India's decision to undertake these tests. Some countries have been markedly critical, *inter alia*, USA, Canada, Japan, Australia and, New Zealand. Pakistan's reaction has been strongly critical "condemning" India's decision; Pakistan has sought to generate international propaganda against India on this issue. Many countries have expressed concern about the tests and most have reiterated their commitment to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

(b) and (c) Government have taken all steps necessary to explain the rationale underlying the decision to authorise these tests which were aimed at reassuring the Indian people that Government would attach the highest priority to addressing India's security concerns. Government intends to continue to actively engage various countries, both at the official as well as the non-official level, with the objective of highlighting our unique record of restraint and our seriousness to actively engage in a constructive dialogue towards the objective of global nuclear disarmament. In our interaction with interlocutors in various countries, Government have reaffirmed that we are a responsible member of the international community and that our policies are consistently marked by a high degree of restraint and responsible conduct.

Number of NRIs from Gujarat settled abroad

186. SHRI SHMED PATEL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that quite a good number of NRIs from Gujarat are settled abroad;

(b) if so, whether Government have assessed their number, country-wise; and

(c) what facilities have been extended by Government to Gujarati NRIs for their participation in investment in India particularly for the industrial development of Gujarat?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No. Sir.

(c) The Government has taken a number of steps to boost investment in India by NRIs including from Gujarati NRIs. Several schemes and incentives are available for investment in the different sectors. NRIs and Overseas Corporate Bodies (OCBs) predominantly owned by